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SUBJECT: MALAWI: MUTHARIKA'S BROTHER KEY TO THE PRESIDENT

REF: LILONGWE 366

Classified By: Ambassador Alan Eastham for Reasons 1.4 b, d

¶1. (C) Summary: Deputy Minister of Information and Civic Education John Bande says Dr. Peter Mutharika, the President's brother, has become the gatekeeper to the President. Bande said that Mutharika and his brother saw his presidency as a "miracle of fate" and intended to use the opportunity to improve Malawi. Furthermore, Dr. Peter Mutharika, an international law professor on sabbatical from Washington University in St. Louis, and President Bingu Mutharika have a vision for improving Malawi and the President does not intend to let anything sway him from his course. Bande suggested this is why finding a compromise solution to the continued impasse with opposition has been so difficult. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In a July 1 meeting, John Bande, the Deputy Minister of Information and Civic Education, told emboff that Dr. Peter Mutharika now acts as the gatekeeper to the President. Peter Mutharika is the President's brother and Chief Advisor to the President on Constitutional, Legal, and International Affairs. Bande said everyone, including Cabinet ministers, must first meet with Peter Mutharika. The younger Mutharika then screens all ideas and concerns before they are brought to the President. He commented that the situation frustrates some because ministers and other key officials can not control how ideas and options are presented to the president.

¶3. (C) Bande also stated that President Mutharika and his brother both viewed the Mutharika presidency as a "miracle of fate" and they intended to use this unexpected opportunity to improve Malawi. He said that the President, an economist by training, and his brother, an international law professor currently on sabbatical from Washington University in St. Louis, have a clearly defined vision for how to improve the country, making it difficult for anyone to influence the President's plan. Bande said he believed the brothers' firm commitment to their particular vision is why finding a compromise solution to the current political impasse in the National Assembly has proven so difficult (ref A). He felt Mutharika was not willing to risk having a political agreement derail his plans for the country.

¶4. (C) Comment: From the Kremlinology Department, we have noticed Dr. Peter Mutharika's status in the seating protocol moving up, usually sitting very near the Chief Secretary and the Attorney General. He has also participated in some high-profile delegations such as the one that negotiated the memorandum of understanding to recognize the People's Republic of China. While others such as Minister of Finance Goodall Gondwe and Chief Secretary Bright Msaka still seem able to get the President's ear, Bande's comments confirm that the best way to get a message to the President is now

likely through his brother. The situation is not entirely different than the government under Kamuzu Banda, who also relied on a small inner circle of senior civil servants and family friends for advice and decision-making.

EASTHAM